

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-11 SIG-03 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 EB-08
L-03 /099 R

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P: T MILLER
INR/REA: H HOROWITZ

-----114687 161827Z /45

R 161705Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY BONN
CINCPAC HONOLULU HAWAII 0000
DOD/ISA
INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USMISSION USNATO

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, VM, CB

SUBJECT: VIETNAM-CAMBODIA RELATIONS

REF: JAKARTA 4586 (NOTAL)

1. FOR PURPOSES OF DISCUSSION WITH THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT ON A CLOSEHOLD BASIS, EMBASSY JAKARTA HAS REQUESTED DEPARTMENT'S EVALUATION OF WHETHER OR NOT VIETNAM IS PREPARING A MAJOR MILITARY THRUST INTO CAMBODIA. THERE FOLLOWS AN ANALYSIS PREPARED BY INR AND EA. OTHER ACTION POSTS MAY USE THIS INFORMATION FOR DISCUSSIONS ON A PRIVILEGED BASIS WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS.

2. FOR INFO ADDRESSEES: THIS ANALYSIS IS FOR YOUR BACKGROUND USE IN GENERAL DISCUSSIONS TOUCHING INDOCHINA AT YOUR DISCRETION.

3. WE HAVE NO CONCRETE INFORMATION THAT VIETNAM INTENDS TO MOUNT A FULL-SCALE MILITARY INVASION OF CAMBODIA, BUT SINCE LAST YEAR, VIETNAM HAS BUILT UP ITS FORCES ALONG THE BORDER, ESPECIALLY IN TAY NINH, LONG AN, DONG THAP, AN GIANG AND KIEN GIANG PROVINCES. RESENTLY THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 80,000 VIETNAMESE TROOPS DEPLOYED ALONG THE BORDER. BY COMPARISON, THE CAMBODIANS ON THEIR SIDE PROBABLY HAVE LESS THAN 50,000 TROOPS SIMILARLY DEPLOYED.

4. IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS CAMBODIAN ATTACKS DURING MUCH OF 1977, PAVN UNITS STRUCK ACROSS THE BORDER IN DECEMBER 1977 WITH THE APPARENT OBJECTIVES OF DESTROYING AS MANY CAMBODIAN FORCES AS POSSIBLE AND WITH THE HOPE OF
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PRESSURING PHNOM PENH TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS ON A COMPREHENSIVE BORDER AGREEMENT. BY MID-JANUARY 1978, MOST VIETNAMESE UNITS HAD WITHDRAWN, PAVING THE WAY FOR VIETNAM'S THREE-POINT PEACE PROPOSAL OF FEBRUARY 5TH. CAMBODIA, HOWEVER, REJECTED THE TERMS AND STEPPED UP ITS PROVOCATIONS. BORDER CLASHES HAVE CONTINUED UNTIL THE PRESENT, WITH CAMBODIAN UNITS TAKING THE INITIATIVE IN MOST CASES. THE MOST PUBLICIZED AND PERHAPS MOST SERIOUS IN TERMS OF VIETNAMESE CASUALTIES WAS THE CAMBODIAN MID-MARCH OCCUPATION OF THE HA TIEN AREA. VIETNAMESE COUNTER-ATTACKS IN MID-APRIL MAY HAVE DISLODGED CAMBODIAN FORCES FROM HA TIEN AND OTHER ENCLAVES, BUT FIGHTING CONTINUES.

5. VIETNAMESE FRUSTRATION OVER CAMBODIAN INTRANSIGENCE, HEAVY CASUALTIES, AND THE SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC COST OF MAINTAINING LARGE FORCES ALONG THE BORDER MAY MAKE A MILITARY INVASION OF CAMBODIA TEMPTING, BUT THERE ARE SEVERAL RESTRAINTS AGAINST SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION. FIRST IS HANOI'S CONCERN ABOUT ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND INABILITY TO PREDICT POSSIBLE CHINESE REACTIONS TO A FULL-SCALE MILITARY THRUST AGAINST THEIR CAMBODIAN ALLIES. SECOND, IT COULD BE A COSTLY, PROTRACTED OPERATION

RESULTING IN NUMEROUS CASUALTIES AND REQUIRING OCCUPATION BY MILITARY FORCE OF PARTS OF CAMBODIA IF THE SRV IS TO SUCCEED IN INSTALLING A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT SIMILAR TO THAT IN LAOS. THIRD, VIETNAM'S CAREFULLY-CULTIVATED IMAGE AS A "MODERATE" REGIONAL POWER WOULD SUFFER, WITH UNPREDICTABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR ITS RELATIONS WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES AND FOR THE CONTINUED WESTERN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE THE COUNTRY SO BADLY NEEDS.

6. INSTEAD, WE BELIEVE THAT VIETNAM HAS DECIDED TO FOREGO A FULL-SCALE MILITARY INVASION FOR THE TIME BEING IN FAVOR OF A POLICY AIMED AT SUBVERTING AND EVENTUALLY REPLACING THE POL POT REGIME WITH ONE MORE AMENABLE TO
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HANOI'S INTERESTS. VIETNAM IS TRAINING A KHMER INSURGENT FORCE IN SOUTHERN VIETNAM, RECRUITED FROM THE LARGE INDIGENOUS KHMER KROM POPULATION AND FROM THE MORE THAN 100,000 KHMER REFUGEES WHO HAVE FLED TO VIETNAM FROM CAMBODIA DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS. IN ADDITION, RADIO HANOI HAS INCREASINGLY DENOUNCED THE POL POT REGIME AS BARBARIC AND "ILLEGITIMATE," GOING SO FAR ON APRIL 3 AS TO URGE CAMBODIAN SOLDIERS "TO TURN THEIR GUNS AROUND" AGAINST THEIR LEADERS.

7. IN CONCLUSION, ALTHOUGH VIETNAM'S FORCES ARE POISED FOR STRONG MILITARY ACTION AGAINST CAMBODIA, THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION SUGGESTS TO US THAT HANOI WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT TO THE CONFLICT WHILE COVERTLY PREPARING KHMER INSURGENT FORCES TO SUBVERT THE PRESENT CAMBODIAN REGIME. THIS POSTURE, OF COURSE, DOES NOT PRECLUDE INCURSIONS OF LIMITED DEPTH INTO CAMBODIA BY SRV FORCES. ALSO, SHOULD "SPONTANEOUS REVOLTS" OCCUR INSIDE CAMBODIA, VIETNAM WILL LIKELY USE ITS MILITARY FORCES TO TIE UP CAMBODIA'S UNITS. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, MILITARY PLANS, INVASIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE124089
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: R IUNGERICH EA/VLC: M P OWENS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780206-1101
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780553/aaaabszu.tel
Line Count: 156
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ff423e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 JAKARTA 4586
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2676167
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIETNAM-CAMBODIA RELATIONS
TAGS: MILI, MPOL, PINR, VM, CB
To: JAKARTA BANGKOK MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ff423e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014